

*The Rights of the Clergy in the Christian
Church asserted.*

IN A
SERMON
PREACHED AT
Newport Pagnel in the County of Bucks,
SEPTEMBER 2. 1706.

AT THE
Primary Visitation
OF THE
Right Reverend Father in God,
WILLIAM
Lord Bishop of *Lincoln.*

In which the Principles of a late Book, Entituled, *The
Rights of the Christian Church asserted,* are Examined.

By **W. WOTTON, B. D.**

The Third Edition.

L O N D O N :
Printed for *Tim. Goodwin*, at the *Queen's-Head* against
St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet. MDCCVII.

The Rights of the Clergy in the Christian Church asserted.

IN A
SERMON

PREACHED AT
Newport in the County of Bucks,
SEPTEMBER 1756
AT THE

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OF THE
Right Reverend Father in God,
WILLIAM
Lord Bishop of Lincoln.

In which the Principles of a late Book, Entitled, The Rights of the Christian Church asserted, are Examined.

By W. WOTTON, B. D.

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L O N D O N

Printed for Wm. Gadsden, at the Golden Ball in St. Dunstons Church in Fleet-Street.

TO THE
Right Reverend Father in God,
WILLIAM
Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*:

And to the Reverend the
Clergy of the Deaneries of
Buckingham and Newport:

THIS
DISCOURSE
(Which is now made Public at Their
Command and Desire)

Is Humbly DEDICATED by

His Dutiful Son, and

Their Faithful Brother,

W^m WOTTON.

T O T H E

Right Reverend Father in God

W I L L I A M

Lord Bishop of Lincoln :

And to the Reverend the

Clergy of the Dioceses of
Buckingham and Newport :

T H I S

D I S C O U R S E

(Which is now made Public at Their
Command and Desire)

is Humbly Dedicated by

His Trustful Son and

Dear Faithful Brother

Wm Wotton.

2 T I M. II. 3.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also.

TH E S E Words are Part of S. Paul's Apostolical Charge to *Timothy*, when he Ordained and Constituted him First Bishop of the Church of *Ephesus*. It plainly appears from them, that when the Apostle placed him there, he proposed to invest him with a Power of Appointing other Pastors, who might assist him in the Work of the Ministry, and who might in due time Appoint others also to succeed them in that Work; that so that Church which he had planted, might never want Teachers and Governors for the Time to come. The Apostle had before put *Timothy* in Remembrance of the Gift which was in him by the putting on of his OWN Hands; Here now he is commanded to use his own Authority, and to commit the Gospel of Christ, i. e. the Trust committed to him before, to faithful Men, who might teach others, what they themselves had been taught.

It is for the sake of these Inferences, which naturally follow from the Text, that I have chosen these Words to speak upon at this Time. The open Insults which have been made upon the Priesthood of late from the Press (a), and upon the whole Ecclesiastical Office and Authority as derived from God, call upon us to give an Account of our Mission, and to lay forth our Creden-

(a) See a Book lately printed, entitled, *The Rights of the Christian Church asserted.*

The Rights of the Clergy

als ; that so we may satisfy our People, that we claim no more, than what the Word of God gives us a Right to challenge.

And here it will be no hard matter, to make the Title good to all the Powers and Privileges which are claimed in the Church of *England* by its Clergy, if we keep to the Scriptures as our Guides in this Matter : For them this New Assertor of the Rights of the Christian Church has virtually thrown aside, *by declaring that every Man is under an indispensable Obligation to worship God after the Manner he thinks most agreeable to his Will ; and in all Religious Matters whatever, to follow the Dictates of his own Conscience (b).*

(b) Rights
of the
Christian
Church,
P. 14.

This, he says, the Magistrate has no Right to break in upon : That when Men have chosen their own Religion, they may set apart whom they please to admonish and exhort them in what they at that time think to be their Duty : That even then, when they have made that Choice, they may alter their Opinions as often as they please ; and when they have thus alter'd them, they are not bound to provide for, or maintain those their Teachers, unless they Change their Opinions along with them. (c) That there is no

(c) " No
" Man's
" Religi-
" on, like

" his Lands, descends from Father to Son ; but every one, when capable, is to chuse his own Church. The only Motive to determine him, is the Saving his own Soul. " It is not his Joining to a Church yesterday, that obliges him to continue in it to day ; but a constant personal Liking " : *ibid.* p. 23, 24. He endeavours to prove, p. 22. That it is against the Law of Nature, to deprive a Man of any part of his Property for the Maintenance of such Opinions as no ways contribute to the public Good, but are, as he judges, prejudicial to his Soul : Because no one having Power over the Property of others on any such Account, could give their Representatives a greater Power than themselves had. — People are injur'd, when they are forced to labour and toil, not for their common Benefit, but for maintaining such Notions as the Public receives no Advantage by. This is a ready way to set the Clergy of the Church of *England* a starving, and the Dissenting Preachers too ; for they may assure themselves, that it is not High and Low Church, but Christianity it self which this Author strikes at. Let but the People be once taught, that they have nothing to do but to Live morally ; and that Positive Institutions of no sort can bind them any farther, than as they are willing to be bound ; and Revealed Religion, which is built upon an entirely different Bottom, will quickly fall to the ground.

such

such thing as Power in the Church, but what is derived from the Magistrate; nay, less than in any Petty Corporation. (d) That the Ordaining or Consecrating Men to the Service of God, is a ridiculous Piece of Mummery (e); and that all Church-Censures are Tyrannical and Unjust.

(d) Preface p. XII.
(e) Rights, &c. p. 74, 75, 76.

All this we have been positively told of late; and that with the greatest Assurance possible, and with an equal Petulancy and Indecency of Style. Therefore since S. Paul exhorted Timothy to be instant in season, and out of season, to admonish, rebuke, exhort, as Opportunity should serve; and since the same Reason for these Acts of Authority will hold to the End of the World, which held then; namely, Because Doctrines subverting the Christian Religion may be taught and spread among Mankind; it is our Duty to oppose them when they are taught, and to lay open their pernicious Tendency as plainly as we can.

If we cannot prove our Commission from above, we ought to be treated as Deceivers; but if we can, we are bound by the Laws of God not to betray our Trust; which in truth is the Trust and Advantage of the People whom the Providence of God has committed to our Care.

In order therefore to set this whole Matter in a clear Light, I shall shew, I. That Morality and a good Conscience are not sufficient by the Christian Institution, to save a Man, unless he positively embraces the Law of Christ. II. That Faith in Jesus Christ without Baptism is not sufficient to make Men Christians. III. That Jesus Christ appointed a Priesthood, which he intended should be perpetual, to preach the Gospel, to administer the Sacraments, and to inflict Censures upon Offenders.

IV. That

IV. That none but Ecclesiastical Officers ought ordinarily to perform these Ecclesiastical Offices. V. That they have a Power to censure Offenders, which does not originally proceed from the License of the Civil Magistrate. And then last of all I shall prove, VI. That the great Objection which is brought against these Propositions, is of no weight.

I. That Morality and a Good Conscience are not sufficient by the Christian Institution to save a Man, unless he positively embraces the Law of Christ. The whole Tenor of the New Testament runs this way. S. Peter says (f), *There is no other Name under Heaven given among Men, by which we must be saved.* S. John teaches us (g), *That Jesus Christ was sent into the World, that all Men might believe in him, and that believing, they might have Life through his Name:* Could they have had Life otherwise, there had been no need of sending him. And when S. Paul say's, *That Life and Immortality are revealed to Mankind in the Gospel* (h), it is plain, That without the Gospel Mankind could not have had Life and Immortality. The Jew's that crucified our Blessed Saviour, did it ignorantly (i); they and their Rulers were not aware of their putting the Lord of Glory to Death; a Zeal for the Law of Moses, which was given their Ancestors by God himself, urged them on to do what they did; yet they were Murderers for so doing, even when they believ'd they did God good Service: And they had perished in their Sin, and been punished for it as Judas was, had they not repented and believ'd in Christ. Cornelius was a just and a good Man, and is commended for such by S. Luke; yet this Justice and this Goodness were not sufficient to save him; they only procured for him an immediate Call and Miracle, to induce

duce S. Peter to preach to him the Gospel of Jesus Christ; so that he received it as a Reward of his eminent Virtues, that the Gospel of Salvation should be preached particularly to him. And therefore when S. Peter said, (k) *That he perceived, God is no Respector of Persons; but that in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him;* he only meant, that they should have an Opportunity given them, if they had it not before, of Embracing the Christian Faith.

(k) Acts
X. 34, 35.

But we are told, *That in Matters of Religion Men are still in a State of Nature, without any SOVEREIGN REPRESENTATIVE to determine for them, what they shall BELIEVE or PROFESS* (l). God indeed is not our Sovereign Representative, but he is our Maker, and our Preserver; and as such has a Right to give us what Laws he pleases, and to appoint whom he wills to be his Officers to execute these Laws upon Earth. If we were indeed such *Autochthones*, such Sons of the Earth, as some fancy themselves to be, then this Liberty consequent upon such a State of Nature might have some Colour. But the Fact is otherwise: God has an absolute Right over us, as our Creator and Preserver, and pursuant thereunto has made a Declaration of his Will to Mankind, has given them a Body of Laws to observe, and has promised a Reward, and annexed a Punishment, to the Observance and Neglect of these Laws: In all this, he has not once asked our Consent: So that to argue from a State of Nature, when the Question is concerning a Positive Law, enacted by a Being that has a competent and an indefeasible Right to enact it, is irreligious; and to seem concerned for God's Honor, when we set aside his Power and Authority, is to mock him, and so in our own Cases we should directly esteem it.

(l) Rights
of the
Christian
Church,
P. 15.

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If

If then our Religion was given us by God, and from him imposed upon Mankind, without a previous Asking of their Consent; we can easily understand, that whatsoever is proved to have been so given, must be submitted to; and the Necessity of such Obedience do's no more depend upon our Will and Pleasure, than the Truth of any Proposition in Mathematic's depends upon our right or wrong Conceptions about it. In a word, it is not left to us whether we will believe or not: The Apostles were charged with a Commission, positively to lay Life or Death before the Sons of Men; and because they themselves would soon fail, they

(m) *ordained Elders in every Church, who were required to commit the Things which they had heard, to faithful Men, who might teach others also.*

(m) Χειρο-
τονουσαντες
αυτους
Επισκοποι-
ντας καὶ ἐκ-
κλησιαστας.

Acts XIV.

23.

II. That Faith without Baptism is not sufficient to make Men Christians. Baptism was understood by the First Christians to be a Federal Rite, whereby all that were so initiated entred into Covenant with God, and obliged themselves to perform such Conditions as the Laws of that Covenant then and there prescribed. So that could the World have been supposed to have been at Liberty before, they were then actually ty'd up; and the State of Nature was as much broken by that subsequent Obligation, as by any Original Contract into which we can ever suppose a Body of Men to have entred for the Preservation of Civil Society. The Apostles plainly said this was Christ's last Order, and they declared that they were Witnesses of his Ascension into Heaven, after he had left them this Instruction: So that if the appointing this Positive Rite of Entry be an Encroachment upon the Rights of Mankind, it is imputable to the Apostles themselves.

Let

Let us see now what was their Practice hereupon. S. Peter in his Sermon at the great Pentecost, when the H. Ghost was first poured out, converted 3000 Souls : They desired to know what they should do to be saved ;
 (n) Repent, say's S. Peter, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, and your Sins shall be forgiven you, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. So S. Philip, one of the VII Deacons, baptized all the Converts in Samaria (o) ; and so did all the Apostles by themselves, or their Assistants, whereever they went.

(n) Acts II. 38.

(o) Acts VIII. 12.

And indeed what our Saviour proleptically said to Nicodemus, plainly shew's that by his Institution, Baptism by Water is *ordinarily* necessary to Salvation. We may farther observe, that where God did visibly interpose in the Conversion of Men to Christianity, where there neither was nor could be any Doubt of the Sincerity of their Faith, that even there the ordinary Means of Entry into the Church, were by Jesus Christ's particular Order made use of.

S. Paul's Conversion was the most miraculous of any Man's whatsoever, after Jesus Christ ascended up into Heaven : He was thrown down to the Ground by a Light from Heaven, and a Voice accompanying that Light told him that Jesus himself spake to him, and commanded him to go to *Damascus*, where he should hear what he was to do (p). When he came thither, Ananias a Disciple then in that City, had a Vision likewise, commanding him to go and lay his Hands upon this future Apostle, and to baptize him. Ananias did so, and by Imposition of Hands absolved him from his former Sins ; consequently whereunto he received his Sight, and then baptized him, constituting him thereby an actual Member of the Christian Church.

(p) Acts IX. 6.

The next Instance recorded in the *Acts*, is almost as extraordinary. The *Apostle of the Gentiles* was just before baptized, and now the *first Gentile* was to be received into the Church. The *Jew's*, if their Numbers be consider'd, were an inconsiderable part of Mankind, for whom in General Christ died. Therefore since Jesus Christ appeared among us as descended from that Nation, to whom particularly the Oracles of God were entrusted, and since they looked upon all Men as common and unclean besides themselves, God miraculously let them see, that the *Gentiles* had a Title to the Gospel-Promises as well as they. The first Heathen Convert *Cornelius* was chosen by God himself, upon the account of his eminent Piety, to be the First-Fruits of the *Gentile* World. He had a Vision commanding him to send for S. *Peter*, and S. *Peter* had another to go to him. When S. *Peter* went, and whilst he was Preaching, the Holy Ghost fell upon *Cornelius* and his Company; and thereby that which was the Reward of Believing after Baptism, was given them beforehand, to let S. *Peter* see that there could be no doubt concerning those Men. How then did S. *Peter* proceed? He immediately asked, Whether it was reasonable to refuse Water to those Men who had received the Holy Ghost as well as himself and his Company? (q) And accordingly he baptized them.

(q) *Acts*
X. 47.

(r) *Acts*
XVIII.
24, 25.

(s) *Ibid.*
v. 26.

Apollos we find was mighty in the Scriptures, and was instructed in the Way of the Lord, (r) *i. e.* in the general Design of sending the Messiah into the World: Yet because he knew nothing beyond the Baptism of *John*, *i. e.* was baptized onely in the Name of the Messiah that was to come, (s) *Aquila* and *Priscilla* took him and expounded to him the Way of God, *i. e.* the necessity of being initiated into the Church, in the Method which Jesus Christ himself had appointed. And that thus we are

are to understand this Matter, appears from S. Paul's Practice in the same Church of *Ephesus*, mentioned immediately after, who caused all those to be rebaptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus, who had been baptized before onely with *John's* Baptism (*t*), thereby declaring that to be a necessary Sacrament (*u*), without which they were not to be looked upon as compleat Members of the Church of Christ.

(*t*) Acts XIX.

1,—5.

(*u*) The great Difference between

the Baptism of *John*, and that of the Apostles after the Resurrection, was, That *John* Baptized in the Name of the Messiah that was to come, (*Acts* XIX. 4.) they in the Name of *Jesus*, who was the Messiah that was come already.

III. That Jesus Christ appointed Ecclesiastical Officers, whom he intended to be perpetual, to Preach the Gospel, to admit Men into the Church, and to punish Offenders. Of this we have several Proofs. S. *Matthew* closes his Gospel with it. Some time after his Resurrection our Blessed Savior speaks to the Eleven Disciples thus: *All Power is given to me in Heaven and Earth. Go Ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded You: And lo, I am with You to the End of the World.* (*x*) *ὅως τῆς σωτέλειας τῷ Ἀίῳ*. Our Author would make us believe, that this *σωτέλεια τῷ Ἀίῳ* means no more, than that Jesus Christ would be with his Apostles as long as they should live and preach the Gospel. (*y*) But the *Ἀίῳ* here denotes the Time of the Messiah, after which there is to be no farther Declaration of the Will of God. Our Saviour therefore promised he would be with them to the End of the World. Then this Promise reaches the Successors of the Apostles as well as themselves. Teaching and Initiating by Baptism are here mention'd; Discipline upon Offenders

(*x*) *Matth.* XXVIII. 18,—20.

(*y*) *Rights of the Christian Church,* P. 163.

is.

(2) John XX. 21, — 23. is added by S. *John*, when he gives an Account of that matter. (2).

The first Care of Successors, or rather Assistants in the Church of *Jerusalem*, which we find in the *Acts*, was when the Seven Deacons were appointed: They were indisputably the lowest Order in the Church; yet there the Church onely presented, (a) the Apostles actually approved, and by Imposition of Hands empower'd those whom they ordained, not onely to act under them as Ministers in taking Care of the Poor, but also to baptize new Converts; as we see S. *Philip* afterwards did at *Samaria*. (b)

(a) *Acts* VI. 5.
(b) Upon this Occasion, I cannot

but take notice of a Vile Forgery, which has crept into very many Editions of the *English Bible*, especially since the Beginning of the late Rebellion. S. *Luke* tells us, *Acts* VI. 1. *That when the number of the Disciples was multiplied, and there was a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews* — that the Apostles said, *Look ye out seven Men* — whom *WE* may appoint over this Business; *ἑς ἑκαταστωμεν*. Now in many modern Editions, and even in some of *Field's* beautiful *Cambridge* ones, instead of *We*, it is, *whom Ye* may appoint over this Business. This is a direct Corruption of the Text, and it is well known to what Purposes it served. We see what the Peoples Power was in appointing Ecclesiastical Officers: They proposed; the Apostles approved and Ordained, and that, as the Text plainly shew's, without calling in any other Authority to make their *Acts* valid besides their own.

If any Man ever had a Celestial Mission to preach the Gospel, it was S. *Paul*: So that he who declared himself to be an Apostle, not of Men, neither by Men, but immediately from Jesus Christ himself, needed not, one would think, any farther Designation by the Governors of the Church to set about that Work: And yet when he was sent abroad to Preach the Gospel with *Barnabas*, he was particularly ordained or consecrated by the Apostles. Before that indeed, S. *Paul* had publicly declared what wonderful Things God had wrought for him in his Conversion, and had disputed with the unbelieving *Jew's*, as any other private Christian might do,

con-

convincing them by his own Experience that Jesus was the Christ: Yet still he had no solemn Mission; and therefore when the Holy Ghost commanded the Apostles to separate *Paul* and *Barnabas* for the Work for which he had called them, they fasted and pray'd, and laid their Hands upon them, and sent them forth. (c) *Acts* XIII. 3. S. *Paul* ordained *Timothy* by Imposition of Hands, when he made him Bishop of *Ephesus*; and he sent *Titus* into *Crete* on purpose to govern that Church; whom that he ordained likewise by Imposition of Hands, we need not question, since we have seen already that it was his constant Practice, χειροτονεῖν Πρεσβυτέρους καὶ ἐκκλησίαν, to ordain Elders by laying on of Hands in every Church. (d)

(d) *Acts* XIV. 23.

It was one of his Advices to *Timothy*, to lay Hands suddainly upon no Man, lest he should be partaker of other Mens Sins. (e) i. e. Not to receive Offenders too soon into the Church by Absolution, lest those Sins forgiven by the Church, whilst unrepented of by the Offender, should be laid to his Door. He was constituted Governor of that Church by S. *Paul*, and the Power of governing that Church, and of performing all Acts of Jurisdiction there, is committed to him alone by the Apostle. He is reminded of his own Ordination, which tho' in the First Epistle the Apostle mentions as done by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery; yet in his Second Epistle, which was the last he ever wrote, lest *Timothy* or the *Ephesians* should make a Mistake, he is reminded of the Gift which was in him by Imposition of the Apostles own Hands. (f) From which, as also from S. *Ignatius's* Epistles, we learn, That tho' the Governors of the Church performed no Acts of Authority without their Presbyters, yet the Presbyters were present as Witnesses onely, not as Fellow-Judges.

(e) *1 Tim.* V. 22.

(f) See *1 Tim.* IV. 14. compared with *2 Tim.* I. 6.

From these Instances, and these too not the onely ones which might be urged out of the New Testament, it appears, that when the Apostles founded Churches they appointed Officers of their own to Baptize, Preach, Ordain and Censure: They acted as Magistrates, and appointed Magistrates after them to do the same. They had no Notion of a State of Nature, wherein the People were to choose their own Religion: They declared it as from God, and exacted Positive Obedience to its Commands in the Name of Jesus Christ, who declared himself to be the Head of his own Church, and in pursuance of that Headship left it in his Life-time as his last Instruction with his Apostles, *To teach Mankind to do all things whatsoever he himself had commanded.*

IV. That none but Ecclesiastical Officers can perform these Ecclesiastical Offices. The Fact may be plainly proved by *S. Luke*, and the most Ancient Writers in the Christian Church: And when we are sure of the Practice, we may very justly argue from that to the Right. It has been already shew'd, that the first Christian Churches were planted and settled by the Apostles and their Ministers, whom they sent forth by virtue of an Authority given them by Jesus Christ, and not by virtue of any Law of Nature empowering Men to chuse their own Religion, and to appoint what Ministers they pleased to preach it to them. We see *S. Peter* commanded the first Converts at the great Pentecost to be baptized. *S. Philip* one of the VII Deacons baptized at *Samaria*. *S. Peter's* Assistants baptized *Cornelius* and his Company. *S. Paul* caused the *Ephesians* who were baptized into *John's* Baptism, to be baptized over again in the Name of the Lord Jesus. *S. Peter* exercised Acts of Jurisdiction upon *Ananias*, *Sapphira*, and *Simon Magus*.
S. Paul

S. Paul delivered the Incestuous *Corinthian* over to Satan, and afterwards forgave him, and by virtue of that Forgiveness ratified that Absolution which the Church of *Corinth* had pronounced before. S. Paul by his own Authority ordained *Elders*, i. e. *Governors* wherever he preached; and empower'd *Timothy* and *Titus* to do the like; and this too is said to be done without the least hint of communicating their Authority with the Presbytery, and much less of receiving it from the People. This is all positive and plain. We find also by the earliest Writers of the Church, that these Acts of Jurisdiction were all executed solely by Ecclesiastical Hands. We find the Body of the Faithful no where pretending to a Power of performing any of these Acts in Opposition to those who had been appointed by the Apostles or their Successors as Overseers of the Church; which shew's that they did not think they had any such Power.

There is but one Instance of Baptizing that can with any Colour be alledged to the contrary; and that is the Case of *Ananias* who baptized S. Paul. But then, if he is barely called a *Disciple*, *Μαθητις*, by S. Luke, it ought to be proved that he was not ordained, which is impossible, before any Argument can be drawn from what he did. And besides, as Interpreters do generally agree that he was ordained, so there was a very Ancient Tradition that he was one of the LXX Disciples; which if true puts the Matter out of Controversy; and it is certain that its Truth can never be disproved. Now where a Practice is clear on one side, a Negative Argument on the other side is of no force. Nay, since God thought fit not to go out of the common Road in the Ceremony of Initiation in this miraculous Case, we cannot reasonably suppose that he would go out of that Road in the

Choice of the Person who was to perform this Ceremony.

S. Paul's Design in his Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* was to give standing Directions to Governors of Churches in all future Ages. Now since all these Directions center in these Ecclesiastical Officers who were certainly ordained: Since *Timothy* particularly was commanded to transmit that Doctrine which he had received from *S. Paul* to Men that would teach it to the next Generation: And since he himself was set apart for that purpose by Imposition of Hands; can we think *Timothy* was not to take the same Method afterwards? What should lead us to judge otherwise? Especially since we know the Practice of the most Ancient Ages was agreeable hereunto.

To tell us that Corruptions early crept into the Church, that strange and erroneous Traditions may be traced as early as the Apostolical Times, is nothing to the purpose. Men are more liable to be mistaken in Speculative Notions, than in Matters of Practice. How the Apostles constituted the first Churches, all the Faithful could know and see; and they were consequently better Judges in things of that sort, and could sooner discern any Innovations there, than when they were taught to expect a visible *Millennium*, and to look for the coming and reigning of Jesus Christ upon the Earth before the general Resurrection.

In short, General and Negative Way's of Reasoning are not conclusive against Positive Matters of Fact; and until Evidences against this Proposition can be brought of equal Strength with the Arguments for it, we are bound to acquiesce in it, and to esteem it true.

V. The Fifth Thing which I proposed to speak to, is, That the Officers of the Church have a Power to Censure Offenders, which does not originally proceed from the License of the Civil Magistrate. When our Saviour was to leave his Disciples, he told them, *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.* (g) This Power he had promised before in *Matthew XVIII*, when he acquainted his Disciples by way of Parable, of the great Desire of God that none that should receive the Gospel of Christ should ever perish; and also instructed them in the Method in which they were to proceed with Offenders, (which very Method *S. Paul* commands *Timothy* to follow.) After which he subjoins these Words, *Whatsoever Ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever Ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* Words which can be rationally understood of nothing but the Exercise of Acts of Authority and Jurisdiction. But we are told, that this was peculiar to the Apostles, and was to last no longer than they lived; that they had Power to inflict Diseases, and even Death it self upon Offenders, and so could execute their own Sentences themselves in such a manner as would be effectually felt. True: But will not this prove, that Preaching and Baptizing are Temporary Institutions likewise, because all miraculous Powers have long since ceased? When the Apostles were sent to execute both those parts of their Office, our Blessed Saviour promised that he would be with them to the End of the World. So *S. Matthew* has it. *S. John*, whose Design it expressly was to fill up what the other Evangelists omitted in their Accounts of the Speeches and Actions of Jesus Christ, and who rarely for that Reason repeats what they say, mentions only what related to the Authority of punishing and pardoning

(g) *John XX. 23.*

doning of Offenders. And *S. John's* Silence may as well conclude against *S. Matthew*, as *S. Matthew's* Silence conclude against *S. John*.

But farther; Is not Government in its own Nature equally necessary at one time as at another? Can it subsist without a Power of animadverting upon Offenders? *Qui vult Finem vult Media*, is a Maxime founded upon eternal Reason, and therefore will certainly hold here. The Primitive Church was CCC Years without the Protection of the Civil Magistrate: Most of that Time it was actually persecuted: The Remainder it was barely connived at, and the mildest Emperors were at most but like *Gallio*, (who was an Officer under one of the gentlest of them) *Men that cared for none of those Things*. Shall we say then, that the Governors of the Church could not lawfully exercise a Power over its own Members whilst it was in that Condition, when we see that *S. Paul* directed *Timothy* how he should proceed in such Cases? Or because Men are not stricken with Death by a word speaking, like *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, or with Blindness, like the Sorcerer *Elymas*, nor afflicted with sore Diseases, as those were whom the Apostles delivered over to Satan, therefore there can be no Punishment? And when our Saviour told his Apostles three several Times when upon Earth, that the (*upright*) Sentence given by the proper Officer below, should be ratified above, did not he certainly know his own Mind, especially in a Matter entirely in his own Power? And if so, what have we to do to contradict it? Are these things to be found in Scripture, or are they not? If they are, why should we be unwilling to receive this, any more than the other Commandments of Jesus Christ?

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We see therefore the Necessity which those who cast off all Church-Power are under, to make Religion only a Human Institution; a voluntary Agreement which Men enter into just as they see good, to serve God their own Way. But the Bible teaches us other Things. There we see, that Jesus Christ prescribed a Positive Law; that he appointed particular Men to teach it, and to govern those that obey it; and that it is not left to the pleasure of Men, whether they will submit to it, or not.

When the *Roman* Empire became Christian, this Power was not broke in upon: Ecclesiastical Officers alone preached, administered Sacraments, and performed Acts of Jurisdiction. The Civil Magistrate then indeed becoming Head of the Church, and Obedience to him being also expressly commanded by the Law of Christ, he had a Right to concern himself in the Affairs of the Church; the same Right which the *Jewish* Kings had in the *Jewish* Church: They made Regulations concerning the Temple-Service; they put in, and turned out H. Priests; they claimed a Power of proceeding against Offenders of the Priestly Order capitally, if they deserved it: In short, they were truly and properly Supreme Governors, under God, of that Church. But they performed no Sacerdotal Acts in their own Persons; they offer'd no Sacrifices; they made no Atone-ments, nor did they burn Incense (b).

(b) See the Case of K. Uz-
ziak, 2
Chron.
XXVI.
16,—22.

The same Things hold with us. The Articles of our Religion declare, "That nothing in Doctrine or Discipline ought to be ordained, contrary to the written Word of God: (i) That they are to be accursed, that presume to say, that every Man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth; so that he frames his Life according to that Law, and the Light

(i) Art.
XX.

"of

(k) Art.
XVIII.(l) Art.
XXIII.(m) Art.
XXXIII.

“ of Nature ; and that because the Scriptures set out
 “ only to us the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby Men
 “ must be saved : (k) That no Man has a Power to
 “ Preach, or to Administer the Sacraments, but he that
 “ is thereunto lawfully called , and sent : That those
 “ are lawfully called, who are chosen and called by Men
 “ who have public Authority to call and send Ministers
 “ into the Lord’s Vineyard. (l) And that those that
 “ are Excommunicated by open Denuntiation of the
 “ Church, ought to be avoided, till they are received
 “ into the Church by the Judge that hath Authority
 “ thereunto ” (m). All these Articles have had the
 Civil Sanction ; not because they were not otherwise
 true and binding, but because the Supreme Civil Pow-
 ers thought it their Duty to declare, That they would
 by their Authority add Weight to those Doctrines and
 Practises, which otherwise might have had much less
 Force with perverse and obstinate Men, who would
 have despised and vilified the mere Law’s of the Church.

That Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction ought to be under the
 Regulation of the Civil Magistrate, in a Christian
 Country, is certain : And yet it is not in the Power of
 the Civil Magistrate at the same time to take it quite a-
 way. So that should he either apostatize from Christi-
 anity, or directly persecute the Church of God, it
 would then have equal Power to inflict Censures Eccle-
 siastical, without consulting him, as it had before the
 Time of *Constantine the Great*.

VI. I come now to the main Argument, which this
 New *Affertor of the Rights of the Christian Church* brings
 against what has been said ; and that is, *The Absurdity*
of two Independent Powers in one State at the same Time :
 And here I may venture to say, that the long Detail of
 Argu-

Arguments, which he produces from the Nature of Government to strengthen his Assertion, is nothing to the purpose. The Power of the Church in a Christian State, is *not independent upon the Civil Magistrate*, tho' it is *derived from a higher Original*. It is only to be exercised in Matters of its own Jurisdiction; *i. e.* in Cases of manifest and flagrant Violation of the Law's of Christ. When it meddles out of that Sphere, or when in that it weakens the Magistrate's Hands in the Execution of his Duty, its Censures are null: But in all Cases where there is a manifest Violation of the Law's of Christ, that very Violation is an Injury likewise to the Civil Power; unless it be in the single Case of denying of Jesus Christ; which when it is enjoin'd by the Civil Power, that Injunction ought not to be obey'd. In that Case no Act of Parliament can oblige; and whereever the Authority of the Civil Magistrate ceases, the Church has a Right to exercise its own Jurisdiction, without any Dependence upon the Civil Magistrate.

Since therefore Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction can ordinarily be exercised under Christian Princes; in no Cases but such as strengthen the Princes Power; if it is derived from a higher Authority than his own, so much the better: His Power is strengthened, when Men are taught to obey, not barely for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake. And if the Power of the Church has sufficient Authority from a Divine Commission, nothing which Man can say, can break it; and if it has not, it is not in the Power of Man to give it.

In one word; Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in a Christian State, is, as to its Limits, and the Cases and Persons upon which it is to be exercised, under the Care of the Civil Government. As to the Persons that are to exercise it, the Magistrate has nothing to do to alter them.

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He is indeed actually Head of the Church : He is immediately responsible to God for its Well-being, and obliged to take care of it. Upon that Score it is, that he has a Right to Limit the Exercise of the Jurisdiction of the Church, when he has no Power to take it quite away, or to put the Execution of it into other Hands. If then, as I said just now, he apostatizes, or persecutes the Church; it is then where it was at first, and has equal Power over its own Members, that it had before *Constantine's* Time; and by such Revolt or Persecution, he is justly to be supposed to throw himself out of it, and to take no farther Care of it, or of any Thing else that belongs to it.

This I take to be a true, tho' short Account of this Matter. The Time will not give me leave to enlarge upon it as much as the Subject would bear: I shall only therefore crave your Patience to consider along with me, to what pernicious Purposes the Principles of this Author tend; and how palpably unjust, and, at this time too, how Seditious this furious Assault upon the *Clergy of the Church of England* is.

(n) *Rights
of the
Christian
Church,*
P. 12.

If your Teachers came to you with *cunningly devised Fables*, or as *S. Paul* speaks, *with the cunning craftiness of those that lye in wait to deceive*, yet even then to teach Men that Religion is just what they will make it themselves, and that bare Immorality, and open Blasphemy against God, are the only punishable Things (n); would let in even those Vices, which it pretends to punish. Nothing in its Nature can oblige the Conscience, but a thorough Persuasion that God dislikes and therefore will punish, or approves and therefore will reward. And nothing can shake such a Persuasion more effectually, than a Declaration that Men may and ought to have Liberty of choosing their own Religion as they please.

Toleration

Toleration of Christians that differ from us is one Thing, and such a Declaration (which our *Dissenting Brethren* would abhor as much as we) is another. And I am verily persuaded, that all the Conscientious *Dissenters* in *England* would be heartily sorry that the Liberty of exercising their own Worship, which the Law allow's them, (and which whatsoever designing Men may insinuate, we are very far from repining at,) should accidentally be a Means of but weakning the Belief, that Faith in Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary to Salvation.

Our Author through a great part of his Writings artificially confounds the Usurpations of Popery with the Proceedings of the Clergy of our Church that are authorized by Law. This is not fair. And that our Priests must be exposed to Scorn, for what the Popish Priests did before the Reformation, is unjust. What have our Priests to do with what is or has been done in the Church of *Rome* ? Besides, what shall we say of the first Reformers abroad ? Were not *Luther*, *Zuinglius*, *Bucer*, and innumerable others among them Priests ? And among our selves, were not *Cranmer*, *Latimer*, *Ridley*, *Farrar*, *Philpot*, *Rogers*, and in a manner all our first Reformers, Priests ? Or did they lose that Character after they opposed the Church of *Rome* ? All the Spiritual part of the Reformation, which consisted in opening Mens Eyes, and in making them sensible of the Weight of that Yoak under which they and their Ancestors had been so long enslaved, was performed by Priests : And without them, the necessity of what the Civil Magistrate did, would never have been sufficiently understood.

And farther, if in our Times any Men have for By-Ends of their own carried the Power of the Church too far, Is what they say a Law ? Ought the Office to

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suffer

suffer for the Miscarriages of particular Men? Is that thought just in other Cases? Besides, have not others, and they as Eminent Men of their own Order, taken as much Pains either in asserting Public Liberty, or in doing Justice to the Supremacy of the Civil Magistrate in Matters Ecclesiastical, and in setting it in a true Light? And is our nice Enquirer into Ancient Canons and Modern Claims, ignorant of all this?

Again, Do the Clergy of the Establish'd Church claim any thing in Temporal Matters, or in the Method of exercising their Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, more than what the Law's allow them? Do they force the Laity to contribute any thing more towards their Maintenance, than what the *Representatives* of these very Laity or of their Ancestors, have given them a Right to claim? That their Maintenance, God be praised, is settled by the Law's, seems to be one of our Author's greatest Grievances, who tells us, *That nothing is found more effectual to keep a pragmatical Priest within some Bounds, than the apprehension of having a Staff and a Pair of Shoo's laid at his Door.* (o) It is that which under God go's a very great way to keep up Religion among us, because that is a certain Encouragement for good and able Men to betake themselves to that Employment.

(o) *Rights of the Christian Church,*
P. 214.

It is a wonderful Thing that just now too, Books of this kind, which would be thought to complement the Government, should be sent abroad. The Queen and the Two Houses of Parliament have thought it necessary to quiet the Minds of the People, by declaring that the Church is not in Danger, and (which is a necessary Consequence of that Declaration) that they will take all possible Care to leave it safe to Posterity. We receive that Declaration with great Thankfulness; and we should think our selves very ill Subjects should we doubt
of

of the Sincerity and Zeal of Her Majesty, and of the Two Houses of Parliament in this matter. We cannot therefore but think all Discourses of this kind to be Seditious as well as Unchristian, and tending only to enflame and exasperate the Minds of those whom our Governors have graciously declared, and that more than once very lately, that they will protect and defend. And whilst Her Majesty, like a true Mother of all Her People, exhorts them with all possible Warmth and Earnestness to live at Peace and Amity with one another, what can more effectually undermine and destroy all Her Pious Endeavours, than such kind of Insinuations as these?

But, God be thanked, we live under a Queen under whom we cannot be afraid of any evil Influence that such sort of Principles as these can have upon Mankind. Her Majesty know's that the Clergy of this Church will teach Her People nothing, but what will tend to strengthen Her Hands. She know's that we heartily take part in those wonderful and amazing Mercy's which have attended Her whole Reign. She know's us to be sincere Friends to the Protestant Interest, and to the Cause of Public Liberty: We gladly therefore leave our Concerns in Her Majesty's Hands; and as long as we claim no Spiritual Authority, for which we have not the Warrant of the Word of God, nor any Temporal Privileges in which the Authority of the Law's of *England* will not justify us, we question not but we shall find a Powerful Protection against all our Enemy's.

But to God the Father, &c.

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